

UPDATED ADVISORY REPORT TO SPECIAL TOWN MEETING (06-07-2012)

The following amends the Advisory Committee Report to Special Town Meeting dated 06-04-2012. Removed language has been stricken and new language is in bold and underlined.

ARTICLE 2

The Advisory Committee re-voted its previous recommendation on Article 2.

~~Advisory recommends favorable action, 10 to 0.~~

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

ARTICLE 3

The following is intended to replace in its entirety the write-up on Article 3 beginning on page 14.

Article 3. To see if the Town will vote with regard to the St. James the Great site:

- (a) to establish one or more Committees as may be advisable for the purpose of analyzing potential uses; or executing on the use chosen by the Ad Hoc St. James Study Committee of a recreational campus, to include a playing field, enclosed ice rink and pool; and for providing proper guidance to the Town on such issues as it shall determine are relevant to the future realization of a proper use or uses for the site;**
- (b) to determine the membership of such committee(s) and the appointing authority thereof, including whether to request that the present membership of the Ad Hoc St. James Study Committee accept appointment to any Committee formalized under (a) above; and**
- (c) to determine the charge for each Committee established, and to whom its report on the results of its charge shall be provided.**

Or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

Contingent upon the approval of the Motion under Article 2 to authorize the purchase of the property at 900-910 Worcester Street (the "Property"), the Board of Selectmen (BOS) request Town Meeting approval to establish the 900 Worcester Street Planning Committee ("900 Worcester Committee") to further study and develop a plan for a recreational complex on the Property, to include a playing field, enclosed ice rink and pool **and to accept the BOS offer to study and vet other uses offered to them.** There is no request for an appropriation under this Article.

Background

Since 2004 when the Town learned of the potential sale of the Property, many studies have been conducted to assess the potential for redevelopment including the *2007-2017 Comprehensive Plan*, the *Wellesley West Gateway Study* (2006) and the Concord Square Associates' *St. James the Great Alternative Land Use Study* (2010). A summary of these studies is provided starting on pages R-2.

The Concord Square Study identified four possible land use concepts, including a recreation complex. A Town Development Review Team ("TDRT") was established in May 2010 that

evolved into the St. James Ad Hoc Committee (“Ad Hoc Committee”). This committee is comprised of members and staff from the BOS, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Community Preservation Committee (CPC), Department of Public Works (DPW), Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and Town Counsel. The objective of the TDRT, and subsequently the Ad Hoc Committee, was to determine whether the recreational proposal was feasible given the parameters and constraints of the Property.

In June 2010, the CPC appropriated \$25,000 to the Ad Hoc Committee to conduct a “fit test” (to determine what would “fit” on the Property) and property appraisal. Gale Engineering (“Gale”) was engaged to conduct an assessment and planning feasibility study for a multipurpose recreational facility on the site. Gale met with town officials and various user groups to refine the community’s needs and recreational development priorities.

In October 2010, Gale outlined a proposed development that included the construction of a rectangular field, a multipurpose, indoor recreational complex to include an ice rink, swimming pool and fitness center. The proposed synthetic turf-surface field would accommodate football, soccer, field hockey and lacrosse events. An athletic lighting system would allow nighttime use, maximizing the number of possible events to be scheduled. The recreation center would comprise three interconnected building sections: the ice arena, the swimming pool and the common area section. The ice arena would house a full-size hockey rink and spectator seating along one side. Team lockers, skate rentals and pro shop and an area for the storage of ice resurfacing machinery would also be located within the building.

Progress on the recreational complex plan (“Recreational Plan”) continued in 2011 as the likelihood of a potential sale of the Property increased. The Ad Hoc Committee reviewed business models related to the proposed Recreational Plan, presenting updates to the BOS and Advisory Committees in January 2011.

In early May 2012 following the execution of the Purchase & Sale Agreement (P&S) for the Property, the Ad Hoc Committee conducted meetings with neighbors, met with Town Boards and Committees and held three public forums, sharing information on the P&S and the proposed recreational use, and responding to questions regarding the purchase, the planning process to date and the proposed process moving forward.

A summary of the proposed Recreational Plan including a graphic representation of the plan and projected development costs and funding sources is provided in the Report of the BOS and Ad Hoc Committee, pages R-10 through R-15. Private funding is projected for the field lights, ice rink and pool. Tax impact and CPC funds are projected for development of the field.

900 Worcester Planning Committee

Town Meeting is now being asked to establish the ***900 Worcester Planning Committee*** to succeed the Ad Hoc Committee. Members of the proposed 900 Worcester Committee will include:

A representative selected by each of the following Boards and Committees:

- Board of Selectmen
- Recreation Commission
- Natural Resources Commission
- School Committee
- Community Preservation Committee
- Council on Aging

- Playing Fields Task Force

A representative of each of the following interests to be appointed by the Recreation Commission:

- Skating
- Swimming

A representative of each of the following interests to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen:

- Resident of the neighborhood near the Property
- One or more at-large members who have related professional, financial or other relevant experience

The following Town staff:

- Executive Director of General Government Services
- Planning Director
- Director of the Department of Public Works
- Town Engineer

The proposed charge to the 900 Worcester Committee is as follows: ~~to execute~~ **to further study** the use recommended by the St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee of a recreational campus, to include a playing field, enclosed ice rink and pool; and to provide recommendations on the development of the site, including cost estimates for design and construction, off-site mitigation and phasing, to study funding and operational models for the facilities, and establish proposed timelines for development and requests for funds.

The 900 Worcester Committee will be required to report **periodically** to the BOS on progress ~~within six (6) months of the closing.~~

Independent and Parallel Review of Alternate Uses by the Board of Selectmen

Given the time that has elapsed since initial review of site redevelopment, as well as public comments received about other potential uses, the BOS will, parallel to the activities of the 900 Worcester Committee, conduct a review of alternative municipal uses of the Property. The objective of this “parallel track” is to ensure that all Town residents and Boards have had the opportunity to make proposals for the use of the site.

The BOS have indicated that it is within their authority to undertake this process and that no vote or Motion is required at Town Meeting. **They have, however, included in the expected Motion an opportunity for Town Meeting to accept their offer to study and vet other uses offered to them.**

As part of this parallel track, the BOS will request that each Town Board and Committee consider and respond to the BOS as to whether it has a proposal for an alternate use. The BOS will meet with any that suggest a proposal to be considered. The BOS will also conduct public forums in the fall and will evaluate whether additional investigation or resources should be requested at a future Town Meeting to further develop ideas deemed reasonable and feasible.

The BOS has identified the following criteria to be applied to its consideration of any proposal:

- “Fit” on the site;

- Demonstrated municipal needs within Town priorities;
- Financial costs and implications in the context of the Town-wide Financial Plan; and
- The Appropriateness of the location for the proposed use.

Review of potential alternative uses for the Property is intended to aid the BOS in making a recommendation to ~~a future~~ **the next** Town Meeting as to the best use of the Property.

Next Steps

Upon Town Meeting approval of Article 2 (property acquisition), the Town, as part of its due diligence, will conduct environmental studies, surveys and other land use inspections to determine the physical conditions of the Property. If CPC funds are approved for 67.5% of the purchase price of the Property under Article 2, that portion of the Property will be limited to recreational and open space use. The metes and bounds and further details of the required Conservation Restriction(s) for that portion of the property will be developed. If established under this Article, the 900 Worcester Committee will continue planning efforts for the Recreational Plan within the scope of their charge while the BOS proceeds with a parallel review of alternate uses. No development of the Property may occur without future Town Meeting approval.

ADVISORY CONSIDERATIONS

900 Worcester Planning Committee Formation

Advisory appreciates the substantial amount of time and energy that the Planning Board and staff, and members of the Ad Hoc Committee have devoted to study of the Property. The Recreational Plan proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee responds to significant articulated Town needs. Since the engagement of Gale Engineering to conduct the “fit” test and feasibility study in October 2010, the recreational use proposal has been presented and studied at length, and subject to input from Town Boards and residents, including neighbors.

Creation of a successor to the Ad Hoc Committee comprised of members with skills and perspective relevant to planning for the proposed Recreational Plan is the logical next step to advance that effort. It is anticipated that the 900 Worcester Committee’s work will include continued efforts to investigate general conditions for the development of any use of the property as well as work specific to the development of the Recreational Plan including details on the costs, funding and operational models for the field, pool and ice rink. This information will be necessary before any proposal for the Recreational Plan may be considered by a future Town Meeting.

Parallel Track under Motion and by the Board of Selectmen

Because time has elapsed since the initial exploration of possible uses and the availability of the Property is no longer hypothetical, Advisory believes it is appropriate to ensure that all Town Boards, Committees and residents have had ample available opportunity to present alternative ideas for the use of the Property.

During Advisory’s review, questions were raised as to whether the Property would be suitable for other municipal uses that had not been specifically reviewed as options for this site and whether uses proposed for the site, in particular the pool, are better sited elsewhere. The potential remains that suggestions and proposals for other, viable uses may emerge through an open public solicitation of ideas and more in-depth analysis. As described, this parallel track provides a framework for input and decision-making that is

clear and focused. Progress on the due diligence and further development of the Recreational Plan will occur in parallel and, in fact, might provide substantial input as more detailed information on the site becomes available.

Advisory appreciate the efforts by the BOS to articulate and commit to a parallel track of review, providing assurance that any proposed alternative development options will be reviewed and priorities weighed within the context of its stated criteria.

The current motion expected under this Article addresses the concern of the establishment of two study and review processes, intended to function in parallel fashion and established simultaneously, but through different means. It formalizes the BOS' intention to study and vet other proposed uses of the 900 Worcester Street site by having Town Meeting accept its offer through the vote on the Motion. It also sets a time frame within which the BOS will report on its final recommendations for use of the Property by the next Town Meeting.

Those Advisory members who had expressed concern about the seeming imbalance between the weight to be given to the 900 Worcester Committee and BOS processes believe that the current proposed motion provides sufficient formality to the Selectmen's offer to solicit Town Board, Committee and resident input on potential alternative uses of the Property. The parallel process as currently set forth provides more clarity on the fact that there will be a viable avenue for raising alternative ideas and more of an indication that the establishment of the 900 Worcester Committee is not a final endorsement of that use to the exclusion of any other alternative use consideration.

Many on Advisory believes that the structure of this parallel approach enables the Town to adequately explore any reasonable alternate uses that may be presented, while appropriately allowing the 900 Worcester Committee to proceed with further development of the Recreational Plan without a loss of momentum or delay.

~~Some members of Advisory have expressed concern that the establishment of the 900 Worcester Committee through a Town Meeting vote, when considered alongside the BOS' plan to conduct a parallel review, does not present a balanced approach to the process. To some, it seems to be a *de facto* endorsement of the Recreational Plan, with the parallel track less robust. Some members of Advisory questioned why both processes were not being proposed in the context of formal motions or a single motion, judging that approach to be more comprehensive.~~

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

**ARTICLE 4. To see what sum of money the Town will raise and appropriate, or otherwise provide for the purpose of pond restoration and protection, including but not necessarily limited to dredging, pond rehabilitation, wetlands enhancements, in-stream treatment, permitting, public education, engineering and other professional services; and determine whether such a sum shall be raised by taxation, borrowing and/or by transfer from available funds; and further to rescind a portion of exempt debt authorized under Article 21 of the warrant for the 2007 Annual Town Meeting; or take any other action relative thereto.
(Board of Public Works, Natural Resources Commission, and Recreation Commission)**

The following is intended to amend the write-up on Article 4 that appears at pages 18-19 by adding at the end the following:

Bids for the dredging of the North Basin of Morses Pond (the Project) have been opened. The low bid, which is likely to be accepted, is for \$819,982.50. The overall cost of the Project, with a 10% contingency, is expected to be \$900,000. The Town already has authority to borrow \$500,000 for the Project under the debt exclusion approved in 2007. CPC has recommended an appropriation of \$400,000 in CPC funds for the Project: \$100,000 to be transferred from Open Space Reserves and \$300,000 from unallocated funds. Any CPA funds not expended for the Project will be returned to the CPC. Advisory believes that the amount of the appropriation is reasonable to accomplish the Project and the recommended funding sources are appropriate.

~~Advisory will make its recommendation after it has had the opportunity to review the actual costs of the project and the details of the proposed funding mechanism.~~

~~Advisory will make its recommendation at Town Meeting.~~
Advisory recommends favorable action 12 to 0, with one abstention.

**ARTICLE 5. To see if the Town will vote to approve the transfer of FY13 Morses Pond Management Program appropriations in the amount of \$11,700.00 from expenses to personal services; or take any action relative thereto.
(Natural Resources Commission)**

The following is intended to amend the write-up on Article 5 that appears at pages 19-20 by adding at the end the following:

In response to Advisory's request for clarification, The NRC reports that it did consider the option of increasing the hours of the EEC position only by the number of hours that the consultant would have spent to do the work and reducing the FY13 operating budget by the corresponding amount resulting in a net savings to the town. The NRC concluded that this option was not in the best interest of the Town because the additional hours resulting from passage of the Motion under this Article will provide the Town with much needed resources to expand its Morses Pond Watershed education and outreach efforts at a critical time.

~~Advisory will make its recommendation at Town Meeting.~~
Advisory recommends favorable action, 10-3.